18

TO THE

Honorable the Commons of Great Britain, in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Debtors confined in His Majesty's Prison of the Fleet,

Sheweth,

THAT your Petitioners, at this Moment of universal Exultation, on an Occasion which should cause the Heart of every Subject of these Realms to overflow with Gladness, are pining under every Species of human Distress!

THAT your Petitioners have no Prospect of being relieved from their accumulated Sufferings, but through the humane Interposition of the Legislature: And they humbly hope that at this joyous and memorable Æra, they shall not supplicate in Vain.

THAT your Petitioners firmly confide in that supreme Power who directs all Things! and fully trust, that, in Imitation of His Mercy, so conspicuously shed on these Kingdoms, by the Re-establishment of the Health of our beloved, revered, and gracious Sovereign, your humble Petitioners shall receive such Relief as their truly deplorable Situation shall be found to require:--Your Petitioners avoid any Enumeration of the Hardships they endure, as they would not wound the Susceptibility of those Feelings, which so eminently distinguish the Commons of Great Britain.

THAT

THAT your Petitioners are all confined upon Civil Actions, nor is there any Thing criminal alledged againſt them, much leſs a Conviction of Criminality; and yet many of them have borne a Puniſhment of Eight Years Impriſonment, with all its attendant Horrors;--Seven Years is the average Life of Man!

THAT many of your Petitioners are held in Confinement on fictitious Claims, and others brought to Priſon through the Colluſion, Baſeneſs, and Rapacity of wicked Attornies; and being without Friends, or Means, they are prevented ſeeking Redreſs either from Law or Equity;--They ſubmiſſively bow down! Nor do they preſume to arraign the Principle which gives to an inexorable Creditor full Power to exerciſe his Cruelty over the Body of the unfortunate Debtor; all they lament is the Labyrinth of Affliction in which the Innocent and Ignorant are often involved, as the Law now ſtands, by wicked deſigning Men.

THAT your Petitioners have repeatedly offered up their All to their juſt Creditor, but without Effect, and moſt of them are debarred from taking the Benefit of the Bankrupt Laws, being of that unfortunate Claſs of Men who are excluded the Advantage of that wiſe and humane Syſtem; they therefore have no Hope of even a Mitigation, to their complicated Woes, but by the Expectation of the benign Determination of the Legiſlature. Their preſent Puniſhment is worſe than immediate Death, for, in this Refinement of Torture, they have the Horror of conſtantly beholding their Deſtroyer, in every Shape of Miſery! and their Exiſtance only prolonged to experience Variety of Wretchedneſs.

THAT your Petitioners, with devout Reverence, and the higheſt Adoration of the God of Mercies! for his ſignal Goodneſs, in reſtoring to the Prayer of an afflicted People, the beſt of Kings, cannot help preſuming that the all gracious Deity has breathed on this happy Land, his Divine Spirit of univerſal Love! for we ſee Benevolence awake in every Quarter, and Advocates innumerable ſtanding forward to emancipate even Thoſe who are born and bred in Slavery.

THAT your Petitioners, under theſe Circumſtances, and with all Deference to this Honorable Houſe, as well for themſelves, as for Thouſands of their unfortunate Fellow Sufferers, are warranted to think, that at ſo propitious and glorious an Epoch they ſhall not be excluded participating in the general Joy.

THAT your Petitioners, with all Humility, and fully convinced that this Honorable Houſe is compoſed of Men, who are feelingly alive to all thoſe Charities of Huſband, Father, Brother; beſeech them, in the Behalf of themſelves, their Wives,

Children

BRITISH MUSEUM

Children and Parents; to look with Compaſſion upon their Sufferings: AND OH! YE PATRIOT GUARDIANS OF A CONSTITUTION, at once the Pride of Britons, and the Admiration of the Univerſe; ſuffer not in a Land, famed through the World for Juſtice and for Freedom, her Sons, without the Allegation of a Crime, to languiſh in diſgraceful Bondage; lowly proſtrate they implore for Liberty, Divine Liberty!--The God of Nature gave it, and it is the peculiar Boaſt of Engliſhmen to preſerve it;

YOUR PETITIONERS therefore moſt fervently and humbly implore for ſuch Relief, as to the Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Humanity of this Honorable Houſe ſhall ſeem meet,—And your Petitioners, as in Duty bound, will ever pray.

Fleet Priſon,
12th May, 1789.

1784